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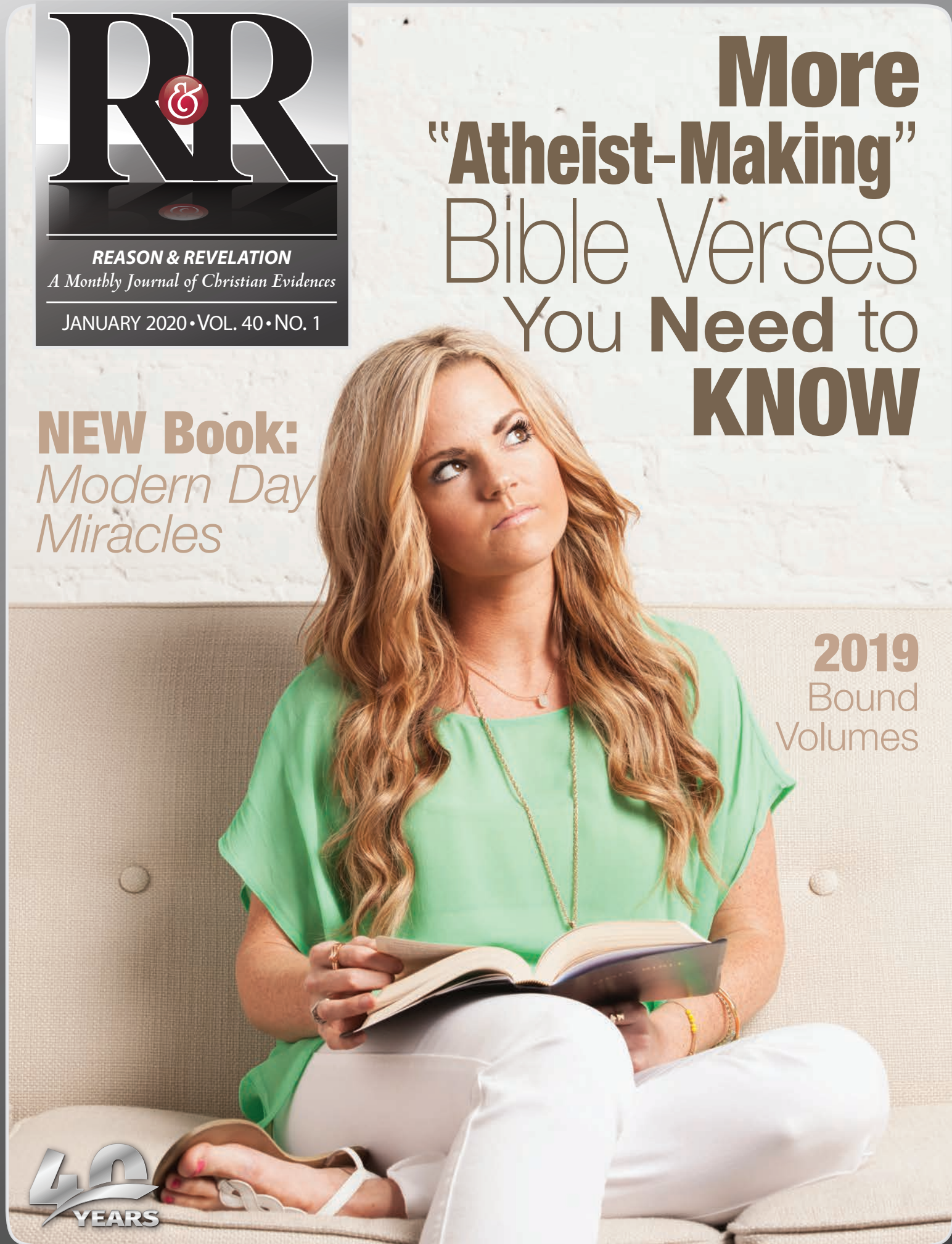
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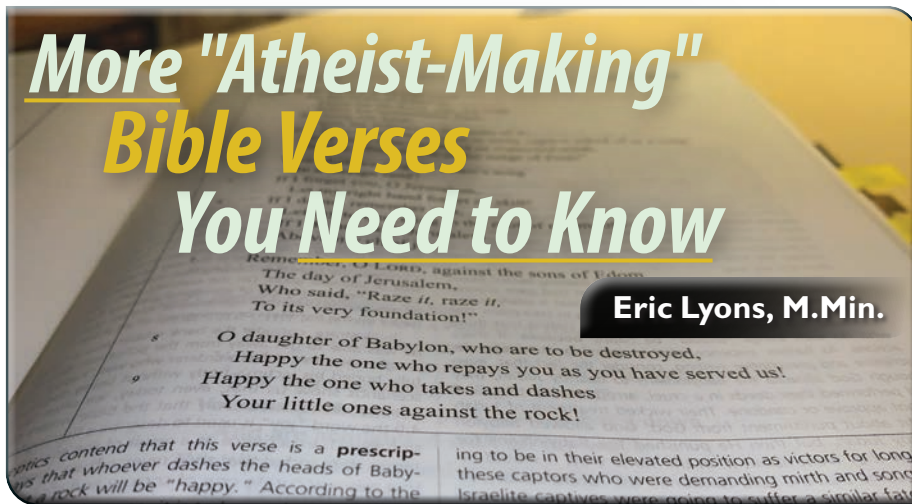
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[EDITOR'S NOTE: Part I of this two-part series appeared in the December issue. Part II follows below and continues, without introductory comments, where the first article ended.]

#6—"GOD WANTS YOU TO BE HAPPY TO DASH BABIES AGAINST THE ROCKS"¹

DENOMINATIONAL preacher-turned-atheist, Dan Barker, listed Psalm 137:8-9 as #1 on his list of "worst Old Testament verses." He stated: "I have always thought this was **the worst verse in the bible**, and my opinion remains unchanged."² According to the *Telegraph*, this passage "is often omitted from readings in church,"³ apparently because "it's just so bad, we're too embarrassed to read it."

So what does Psalm 137:8-9 say? "O daughter of Babylon, who are to be destroyed, happy the one who repays you as you have served us! **Happy the one who takes and dashes your little ones against the rock!**" According to some critics, God is suggesting that believers "**should be** happy," even "blessed"—"to kill innocent babies of those who are keeping you from worshipping your own god."⁴ But is this really what the text means? As is so often the case, the **context**

of the passage has been ignored or dismissed, and the **worst possible** interpretation is touted as the correct interpretation.

What is this nine-verse psalm all about? It's really quite simple to understand and interpret **if** a little time is taken and the context is considered. The Jewish psalmist was captive in Babylon (vs. 1). As he and others longed to return to their homeland of Judea, their Babylonian plunderers and captors requested entertaining songs about Jerusalem (vs. 3). The mournful psalmist did not want to sing and play joyful songs in Babylon, while he mourned being torn away from Zion (vss. 4-6). He recalls how the Edomites (in essence) cheered on the Babylonians' destruction of Jerusalem (vs. 7). But then the inspired psalmist concluded in verses 8-9 with a prophecy about **Babylon's own downfall**: "O daughter of Babylon, **who are to be destroyed**, happy the one who repays you as you have served us! Happy the one who takes and dashes your little ones against the rock!" The psalmist was really doing nothing more than what other Bible writers did: prophesying about the coming devastating destruction of Babylon at the hands

of the Medes and Persians. Babylon was a mighty kingdom (Isaiah 13:19), but it was going to fall (21:9), and it would fall to "the Medes" (12:17; 21:2).

In Jeremiah 12:1, the prophet asked God about the Babylonians' destruction of Judah, saying, "Why does the way of the wicked prosper? **Why are those happy who deal so treacherously?**" Jeremiah was not suggesting God commanded the Babylonians to rejoice about Judah's destruction; rather, he was **describing** their doom. Jeremiah would later prophesy of Babylon's destruction, saying: "Because you were **glad**, because you **rejoiced**, You destroyers of My heritage... Chaldea shall become plunder; all who plunder her shall be **satisfied**" (50:11,10). Like the Babylonians who "rejoiced" at Judah's destruction, the Medes and Persians would be "happy" when they defeated Babylon. Again, God was not blessing the Medes and Persians with righteous happiness and satisfaction of their future destruction of Babylon, but was **describing their feelings** (however so wrong they were). Similarly, Psalm 137:8-9 only describes (**not prescribes!**) how the one who would conquer Babylon would be happy, even when he "dashes your little ones against the rock!"⁵

#7—"GOD COMMANDS WIVES TO SUBMIT TO THEIR HUSBANDS"

BELIEVE it or not, according to *The Telegraph* of London, one of the "top 10 worst Bible passages" is Ephesians 5:22, in which Paul taught, "Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord."⁶ In his book *God: The Most Unpleasant Character in All Fiction*, Dan Barker titled chapter nine simply "Misogynistic."

Immediately under this chapter title, Barker prominently displayed Genesis 3:16 as apparent proof of God's alleged misogyny: "Your desire shall be for your husband, and **he shall rule over you.**"⁷ Later Barker wrote: "Women are second-class. Because of Eve's insubordination, she was forced to become dependent on man. From then on, all women are inferior, so the bible says."⁸

Is God really misogynistic? Does the Bible teach that women are actually inferior to men? And do women, according to the Scriptures, have to "submit to their husbands"?

Before answering these questions (which we are happy to do), let's pause momentarily to ask what value atheistic, Darwinian evolution places upon women. The fact is, Charles Darwin himself wrote in *The Descent of Man* that "[t]he chief distinction in the intellectual powers of the two sexes is shown by **man's** attaining to a **higher eminence, in whatever he takes up, than can woman**—whether requiring deep thought, reason, or imagination, or merely the use of the senses and hands.... [T]he average of mental power in man must be above that of woman.... [M]an has ultimately become superior to woman."⁹ The Bible never teaches that men are more valuable than women, or that men should use their "intellectual powers" and physical strength to force women to do whatever they want. Yet, when atheistic evolution is taken to its logical conclusion, then "might makes right" and the "fittest" survive and excel to dominate and exploit the weaker to their own pleasure. Atheists simply have no logical moral grounds upon which to make a rational argument for

why men should treat women with love and respect.

On the other hand, if God exists and the Bible is His Word, then a faithful man of God will love and cherish women. After all, the God of the Bible loves women. He loves "the world" (John 3:16), which is full of men **and women**. He created women (as He did men) "in His image" (Genesis 1:26-27). When God put on flesh and dwelt among mankind, He showed great compassion upon women (Luke 11:11-15; John 4:1-42; 19:25-27). He loves women so much that He freely offers them (as He does men) eternal life through Jesus' sacrificial death (John 3:16; Luke 24:47; Romans 1:16). "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, **there is neither male nor female**; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:29). Christian husbands and wives are "**heirs together** of the grace of life" (1 Peter 3:7). In truth, men and women are equal in their worth to God.

Furthermore, **God** not only loves women, He commands **men** to love, cherish, protect, and honor women. To the church at Colosse Paul wrote: "Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them" (Colossians 3:19). To husbands in Ephesus he commanded: "[L]ove your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her.... So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself.... [L]et each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself" (Ephesians 5:25,28,33). Peter wrote that husbands are to dwell with their wives "with understanding, **giving honor to the wife**" (1 Peter 3:7).¹⁰

So what is the main problem that atheists and skeptics (especially in the 21st century) have with the biblical teachings about men and women? Largely that God created two (and only two) different sexes to have different roles in the home and in the Church. Yet, the omniscient, omnipotent, perfectly holy, loving, and just Creator of the Uni-

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verse **has every right to define the roles of His creation.** A man may dislike that he was not created with the anatomical and physiological ability to carry a child in a womb for nine months, to give birth to a baby, or to nurse a newborn. He may prefer to be a follower in the family rather than the courageous leader God expects him to be (1 Corinthians 11:3). He may wish that he wasn't assigned the role of selfless protector (Ephesians 5:25). If he was given the choice, he might rather take what he perceives (however so naively) to be the "easier role," and just "submit" to his wife, and let "the buck stop" with her, and not feel the pressure of being the leader of the family.

Children may cry that their Creator is unfair because they must "obey [their] parents" (Ephesians 6:1). Teenagers may think it quite ignorant to have to submit to older people (1 Peter 5:5) "who don't even know how to use a smart phone." An unmarried man with no children may disdain God for detailing in the Bible that he's not qualified to be an elder or deacon in the local church (1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9)—even though he's a billionaire and the CEO of a Fortune-500 company! "How could a poor, married farmer with 10 kids be more qualified to serve as an elder of a local church than a billionaire bachelor?!"

Similarly, a woman may dislike that Paul wrote that "the head of every man is Christ" and "the head of woman is man" (1 Corinthians 11:3). She may claim that the biblical teaching of man's headship over women (Genesis 3:16) and the command for wives to "submit to" their husbands "made her an atheist." She may openly despise Christian-

ity, since, in the church, the apostle Paul taught, "I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor" (1 Timothy 2:12-14, ESV).¹¹ Yet, none of this proves that God doesn't exist or that the Bible is not His inspired revelation to humanity. It only demonstrates what has always been the case—most people do "what is right in their own eyes" (cf. Judges 17:6; 21:25). Like spoiled children who are angry at their parents (whose rules they deem "unfair" and do not understand the wisdom of), prideful people become angry with their "Father" in heaven. Most people refuse to bow to the will of their Creator. Most of humanity fails to "humble [themselves] under the mighty hand of God" (1 Peter 5:6). It should come as no surprise then that the same souls who refuse to "acknowledge God" (Romans 1:28, ESV) and to submit to Him, will also belittle His Word, especially those passages requiring humble, respectful submission of wives to their husbands.

#8—"GOD COMMANDS SLAVES TO SUBMIT TO THEIR MASTERS"

IT'S bad enough that the Bible teaches that wives are to submit to their husbands, but Scripture doesn't stop there. The Bible writers actually command slaves to submit to their masters! How can anyone be okay with that kind of biblical teaching? How can any decent, morally minded person be a Bible-believing Christian when the Bible requires such rubbish?!"

Unsurprisingly, on most any list of "bad Bible passages" you will

find one or more of the following verses:

- Ephesians 6:5—"Slaves, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling" (ESV).
- Colossians 3:22—"Slaves, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters" (ESV).
- 1 Timothy 6:1—"Let all who are under a yoke as slaves regard their own masters as worthy of all honor" (ESV).
- 1 Peter 2:18—"Servants, be submissive to your master with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh."

According to Penn Jillette, there is a **"celebration of slavery"** in the Bible, which is another reason he gives for being an atheist.¹² Number 10 on the *Telegraph's* "Top 10 Worst Bible Passages" is 1 Peter 2:18. And, one of the self-professed "tantalizing tidbits" that Valerie Tarico listed in her Salon.com article (titled "11 Kinds of Bible Verses Christians Love to Ignore"), was the Bible's treatment of slavery. According to Tarico, "The Good Book contains passages about...slavery that Evangelicals conveniently refuse to acknowledge.... The reality is that the Bible says much more in support of slavery than against it. Even the New Testament Jesus never says owning people is wrong. Instead, the Bible gives explicit instructions to masters and slaves. Awkward."¹³

Americans often envision ancient slavery as the kind of oppressive bondage that was popular among some slave owners in North America in the 18th and 19th centuries, when millions of Africans were stolen from their homelands and shipped across the Atlantic. Certainly, some first-century slavery was similar, but often it was quite different. For example, slavery in New Testament times was not based on race. Many foreign soldiers and their families became

slaves after being captured during times of war.¹⁴ What's more, "[s]ome became slaves because they could not pay back the money they had borrowed. The government would also take people into slavery if they could not pay their taxes."¹⁵

Consider the fact that the ancients would no doubt interpret certain **modern American practices** as forms of "slavery." For example, hundreds of thousands of Americans who work, labor nearly one-third of every year **for the government**. That is, Americans are **forced** by the government **with the threat of fines and imprisonment** to pay over 100 days wages to local, state, and federal governments every year. According to irs.gov, U.S. citizens who fail to pay government-mandated taxes can be prosecuted and imprisoned for up to five years. (Imagine 1st-century slaves walking into a U.S. prison and seeing men and women living for years in a six-by-eight-foot prison cell for the same crime that they committed, which resulted in their enslavement. What might they call prisoners today who may be forced to pick up trash on the side of the Interstate or perform some other kind of labor? A kind of "slave.") And what about the military draft—"the practice of **ordering people by law to serve** in the armed forces"?¹⁶ To this day, all 18-25-year-old males in the U.S. are required to register with the Selective Service System in case of "a crisis requiring a draft"¹⁷—a draft in which thousands or millions of men would be **forced** to go to war, and possibly die for their country, whether they wanted to or not. (I'm not suggesting that we should defraud the government, or that we should refuse to submit to its

authority if the draft is reinstated; I am simply suggesting that "slavery" was broadly defined in the first century.) When people disparage Bible writers for commanding slaves to be obedient to their masters, we must understand that there were various kinds of slavery in the first century, including some forms that resemble certain practices today, which may be generally accepted and morally justified.

What's more, the Bible does **not** celebrate and champion slavery, at least not the kind of slavery most people think of when they hear the term. In truth, Paul specifically condemned "kidnappers" (*andrapodistais*) or "menstealers" (KJV) as lawless and insubordinate individuals who practice that which is "contrary to sound doctrine" (1 Timothy 1:10). Greek authorities define this kidnapper as a "slave-dealer."¹⁸ Far from endorsing such activity, Paul groups these menstealing, slave traders with murderers, liars, and other ungodly sinners (1 Timothy 1:9-10).

So why does God require slaves to respect, honor, and even serve their masters? The fact is, Paul and Peter's instruction for slaves to honor their masters is perfectly consistent with the rest of God's Word regarding all Christians submitting to those in positions of authority. To the Christians living in the heart of the Roman Empire, Paul taught: "Let **every soul** be subject to the governing authorities.... Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor" (Romans 13:1,7; cf. Matthew 22:21). Similarly, Peter wrote: "Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake,

whether to the king as supreme, or to governors.... For this is the will of God.... Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king" (1 Peter 2:13-17). Was the Roman Empire corrupt in many ways? Certainly. Was a Christian's submission to Rome a blanket endorsement of the Empire? Not at all. But Christians were (and are) to be humbly compliant.¹⁹

God expects all Christians to have a spirit of submission. Children are to submit to their parents (Ephesians 6:1-3). Young people are to be submissive to older people (1 Peter 5:5). Wives are to submit to their husbands (1 Peter 3:1-2). Members of local churches are to submit to their overseeing elders who rule over them (Hebrews 13:17; Acts 20:28). Local shepherds are to submit fully to the Chief Shepherd (1 Peter 5:1-4). In short, all Christians, including those in leadership positions, are to "be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for 'God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble'" (1 Peter 5:5). And, yes, God expects His people to humbly "submit...to every authority instituted among men," whether to kings or to slave masters (1 Peter 2:13,18, NIV).

God did not create the practice of slavery.²⁰ And His instructions regarding a slave's submission to his master were not given because God favors a master over his slave (Galatians 3:28), or because He simply wants some people to have harder lives than others. The specific purpose that Paul gave for Christian slaves submitting to their pagan masters was "so that the name of God and His doctrine may not be blasphemed" (1 Timothy 6:1).

God commands **all Christians** to do their best to make the most

(cont. on p. 8)

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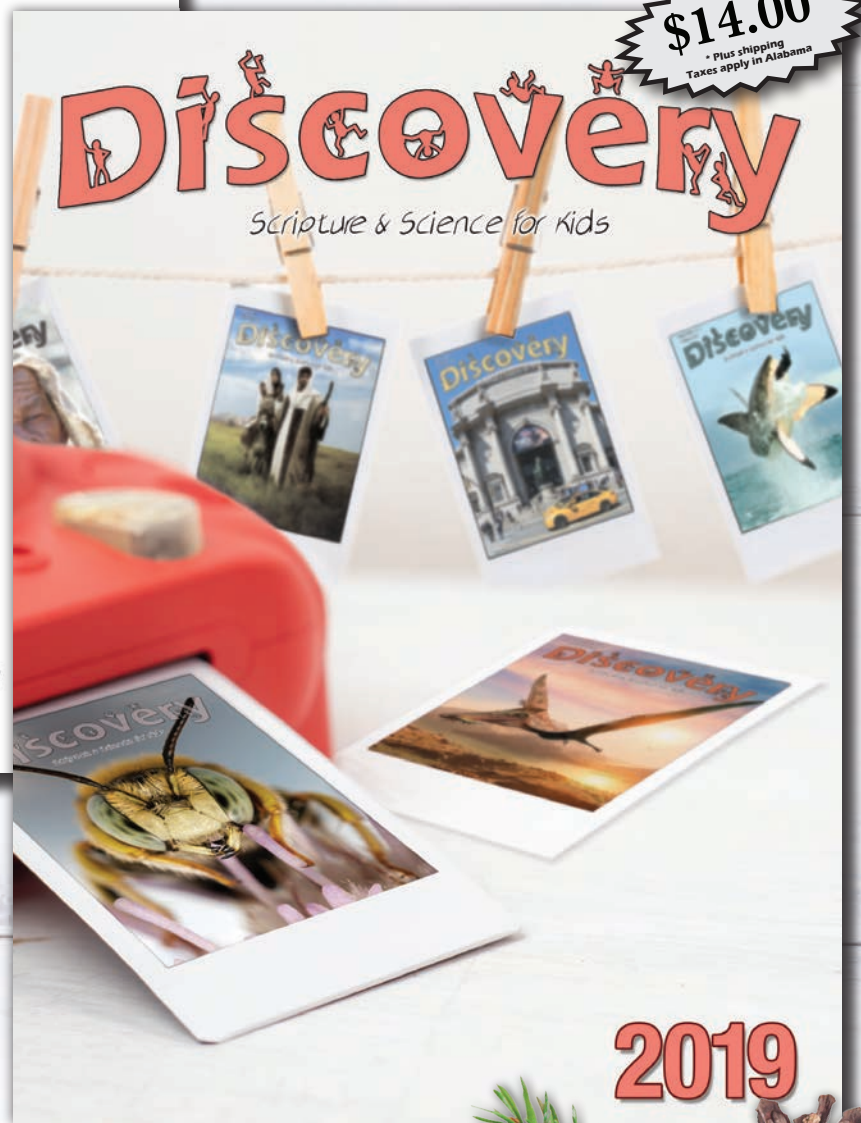
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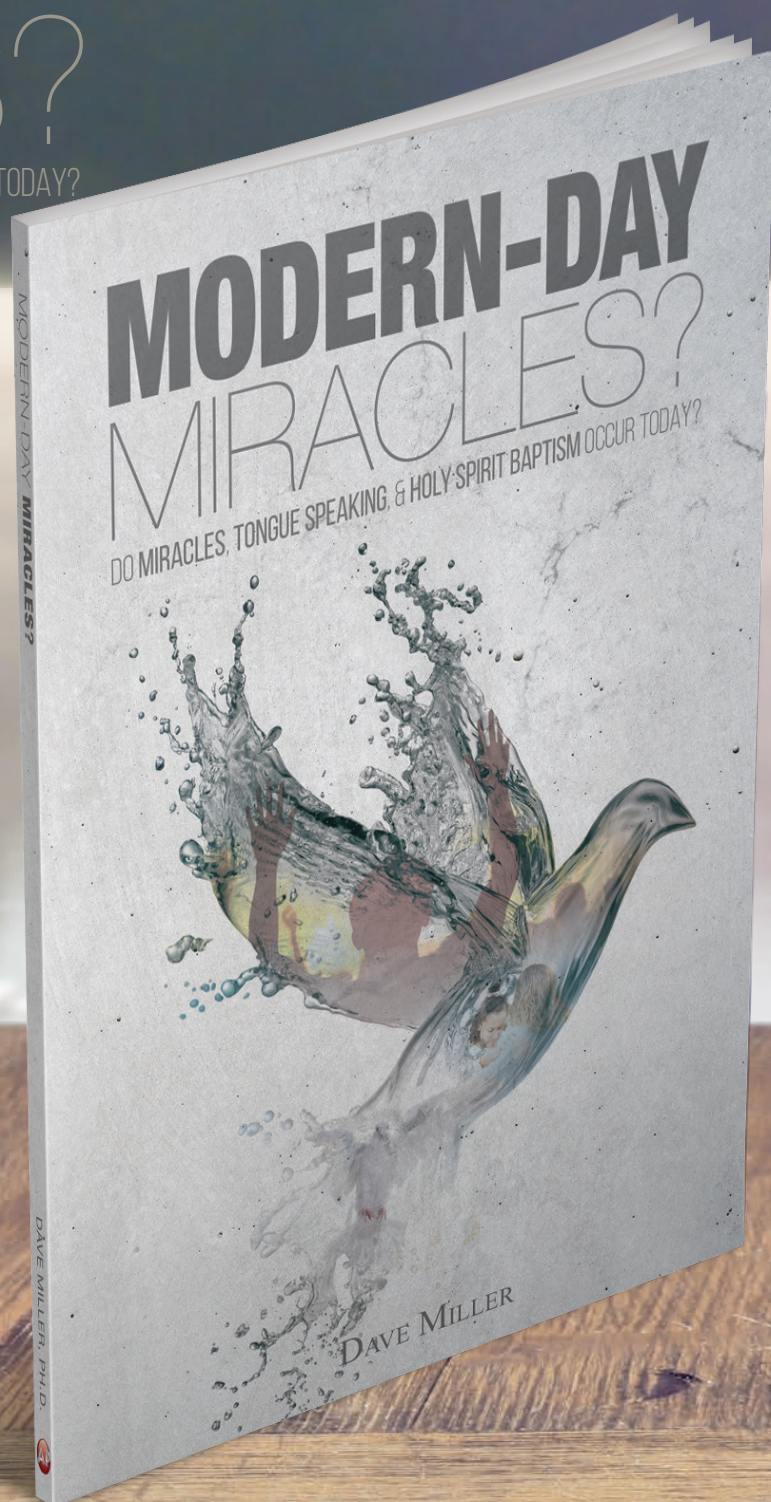
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for the cause of Christ **in whatever situation** they find themselves. “Let each one remain in the same calling in which he was called. Were you called while a slave? Do not be concerned about it; but if you can be made free, rather use it. For he who is called in the Lord while a slave is the Lord’s freedman. Likewise he who is called while free is Christ’s slave” (1 Corinthians 7:21-23). Whether a person becomes a Christian while in slavery or in a terrible marriage, God wants His people to change from the inside out and have a positive spiritual impact on those around them—so that the souls of the lost might be saved (cf. 1 Peter 3:1-2). We are called to be obedient to parents, husbands, governing officials, and yes, even slave owners. “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works **and glorify your Father in heaven**” (Matthew 5:16). Rather than giving people reasons to curse Christ and His doctrine, Christians are called to be obedient to all those in positions of authority “**for the Lord’s sake**” (1 Peter 2:13). We are called to be honorable at all times so that we may “put to silence the ignorance of foolish men” and “by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation” (1 Peter 2:15,12). In short, “humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time” (1 Peter 5:6).

Over time, with the spread of Christianity and with increasing numbers of slave masters becoming Christians, the physical lives of many slaves would have improved dramatically. As slave owners with honest and good hearts learned (1) to love the Lord with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength, and (2)

to love their neighbors (including their slaves) as themselves (Matthew 22:36-40), they would give up “threatening,” just as God commands (Ephesians 6:9). As Christian slave owners contemplated treating others how they wanted to be treated (Matthew 7:12), they would give their slaves “what is just and fair,” knowing that they, too, had a Master in heaven (Colossians 4:1). As slave owners submitted to Christ, they would be transformed by the Gospel, learning to be “kindly affectionate” to everyone (Romans 12:2,10), including all those who served them.²¹ In short, far from endorsing sinful slavery, the Gospel, **taken to its logical conclusion**, would eventually lead truth-seeking masters and government officials to help bring an end to any kind of cruel, sinful captivity.²²

Atheists may express repulsion for what the Bible teaches about slavery but, in truth, it’s the atheistic position that is quite irrational. After all, upon what logical grounds can an atheist ever call anything absolutely, objectively evil, including the kidnapping of people and forced servitude? And if “might makes right” and the “fittest survive” (and flourish), could an atheist not logically rationalize stronger people stealing and subjugating weaker people for their own purposes? If God does not exist, and man is nothing more than an evolved animal, it would be just as “right” to capture, enslave, and multiply human beings as it is to trap mice, encage rabbits, and breed dogs. Such is simply the case if atheism is true.

#9—“CHRIST PREACHED A HELL-FIRE-AND-BRIMSTONE ETERNAL PUNISHMENT”

LAST, but not least, the Bible’s teaching on the reality of eternal punishment for unbelievers has perhaps “made” more atheists than any other teaching of Scripture. After expressing that he did not “believe one can grant either superlative wisdom or the superlative goodness of Christ as depicted in the Gospels,” popular early-20th-century agnostic Bertrand Russell indicated that he was not concerned about what **other people** said about Christ, but “**with Christ as He appears in the Gospels.**”²³ How so? In his widely distributed pamphlet “Why I Am Not a Christian,” Russell argued, “There is one very serious defect in Christ’s moral character, and that is that He believed in hell. I do not myself feel that any person who is really profoundly humane can believe in everlasting punishment. Christ certainly as depicted in the Gospel did believe in everlasting punishment.”²⁴

Many Christians foolishly and hypocritically avoid the Bible’s teaching on hell, but refer regularly to Scripture’s allusion to heaven. Yet, as Russell and many other critics of Christ are very well aware, according to Jesus and the Bible writers, “eternal punishment” is just as much a reality as “eternal life.” After explaining to His disciples how God will separate the righteous from the wicked at the Judgment (Matthew 25:31-45), Jesus concluded by telling them that the wicked “shall go away into eternal punishment: but the righteous into eternal life” (25:46, ASV).²⁵ Earlier He stated that the wicked will be sent away “into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his

angels" (Matthew 25:41). Hell's fire "shall never be quenched" (Mark 9:43), the figurative "worm" that eats on the flesh of hell's inhabitants "does not die" (Mark 9:48), and the wicked who find themselves in hell (due to their rejection of God's gracious gift of salvation through Christ) "shall suffer the punishment of eternal destruction" (2 Thessalonians 1:9, RSV). As it was in Sodom, when God "rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all, even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed" (Luke 17:29-30). Thus, as Jesus taught, "My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I say to you, fear Him!" (Luke 12:4-5).

Bertrand Russell accused Jesus' preaching of being full of "vindictive fury against those people who would not listen to His [Jesus'] preaching." "You do not," he contrasted, "find that attitude in Socrates. You find him quite bland and urbane towards the people who would not listen to him; and it is, to my mind, far more worthy of a sage to take that line than to take the line of indignation." He added:

I really do not think that a person with a proper degree of kindness in his nature would have put fears and terrors of that sort into the world.... I must say that I think all this doctrine, that hell-fire is a punishment for sin, is a doctrine of cruelty. It is a doctrine that put cruelty into the world and gave the world generations of cruel torture; and the Christ of the Gospels, if you could take Him as His chroniclers represent Him, would certainly have to be considered partly responsible for that.

So there you have it: how can people believe and accept the message of the chroniclers of Christ (i.e., the Gospel writers), when such accounts are full of hell-fire-and-brimstone preaching?

Consider four reasons why Jesus and the Bible's teachings on hell logically should **not** make **anyone** an atheist. First, Bertrand Russell stated that he did not "feel" that any "humane" person can believe in eternal punishment, and since Christ did, then He had a "defect" in His "moral" character. Yet, truth, objectivity, and logical argumentation are **not** based upon people's feelings. Atheists cannot logically condemn the Bible's teaching about hell as objectively "inhumane" and "immoral," while simultaneously believing that human beings arose by chance from rocks and rodents over billions of years. If an eternal, supernatural Creator does **not** exist, then **objective**²⁶ goodness and wickedness, justice and cruelty **cannot** logically exist. **Actual** good and evil, fairness and unfairness can only exist if there is some real, objective point of reference—"some objective standard...which is other

than the particular moral code and which has an obligatory character which can be recognized."²⁷ Indeed, the **best** that atheists can "argue" about the biblical teaching of hell is that they "feel" like it is "immoral," but they cannot actually prove such.

Second, atheists and agnostics also fail in their assessment of hell because they fail to grasp what the Bible teaches about the reality, offensiveness, and severity of sin. This failure should come as no surprise because a person cannot have a proper view of sin without having a proper view of God and the Bible. Once a person comes to know that God exists and the Bible is His Word,²⁸ he then learns that there are no "white lies," innocent "alternative lifestyles," or mere "affairs." There is only Truth or lies. There is only God's infinite right way versus all of the prideful ways of man. There is only pure holiness versus repulsive unholiness. There is only light and darkness. And, since "God is light and in Him is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5), His innately pure and holy nature will not allow Him to tolerate lawless-

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ness (Habakkuk 1:13; Isaiah 59:1-2; 1 John 3:4).

Third, God's perfect justice demands punishment for wrongdoing. The Bible reveals that God is 100% just. There is nothing unfair about Him. "Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne," exclaimed the psalmist (89:14). "All of His ways are justice, a God of truth and without injustice; righteous and upright is He" (Deuteronomy 32:4). A just judge is one who shows no partiality (Deuteronomy 1:17), and God "shows no partiality nor takes a bribe" (Deuteronomy 10:17). A corrupt judge allows the guilty to go unpunished, while a just judge pronounces righteous judgment upon lawbreakers. "[H]e who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done, and there is no partiality" (Colossians 3:25). The guilty cannot "buy" their way out of punishment. They can't "flirt" their way out of righteous judgment. Similar to how citizens of an earthly kingdom rightly rejoice at the pronouncement of punishment for the wicked, humanity should rejoice that we have a just Judge who also punishes evildoers.

"But wait a minute! A just judge wouldn't punish people forever!" Says who? Says the sinner who has a shallow, flippant view of the wretchedness of sin and the holiness of God? Says the sinner who did the crime but doesn't like the time? Says the person who is not perfectly impartial? Says the person who knows virtually nothing compared to the omniscience of God? What's more, aren't just and fair sentences and punishments (even in the physical realm) often much, much longer than the amount of time the crime actually took to commit? A man can murder an

innocent person in only one second and yet justly spend the next 1.5 **trillion** seconds (or 50 years) in prison. Certainly the thought of being punished forever and ever is a sobering, scary thought, but in truth, only the omniscient, infinitely wise, and perfectly just Judge is in a position to decide appropriate punishment for unforgiven sin. In truth, a rejection of God based upon the biblical teaching of hell is a rejection based upon emotion, not evidence.

Fourth and finally, though "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23), and though all sinners deserve eternal punishment, **because of God's perfect love, no one** has to go to hell. God has given us an all-powerful, spiritual lifeline (Romans 1:16). Indeed, "the wages of sin is death, **but** the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23). Some unbelievers love to talk about God's "vindictive fury," but they willfully ignore the overall theme of the Bible—"God is love" (1 John 4:8). He doesn't want **anyone** to perish (2 Peter 3:9). God "desires all men to be saved" (1 Timothy 2:4). From the moment wretched sin entered the world, God began revealing His answer to the sin problem (Genesis 3:15; 12:1-3). Following thousands of years of promises and prophecies throughout the Old Testament pointing to the ultimate "Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29), "God sent forth His son" to redeem the slaves of sin to become children of God (Galatians 4:4-5). "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that **whoever** believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into

the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved" (John 3:16-17). Indeed, God is so loving that He not only warned us of the eternal consequences of unforgiven sin,²⁹ but even when we succumbed to sin, God took upon Himself the punishment for our sins, that we might be saved! So why will many people still go to eternal hell? Because they **choose** to. Because they "trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which [they were] sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace" (Hebrews 10:29).

CONCLUSION

THE Word of God has been attacked and twisted since the beginning of time—ever since Satan changed what God said about eating the forbidden fruit, and lied to Eve (Genesis 2:16-17; 3:4). Sadly, nothing has changed in thousands of years of human history. Satan is the father of lies (John 8:44), and most people believe the lies he sells (Matthew 7:13-14).

No lie is more dangerous than that told by many modern atheists, agnostics, and skeptics—that the Bible is not the inspired Word of God. Yet, there is nothing to fear, because the truth has nothing to fear! Just as 2 + 2 does not have to worry about "4," truth does not fear an honest investigation. In reality, if the biblical criticisms of unbelievers are fairly considered, then the faith of Christians will only grow stronger, and honest unbelievers will see the error of their ways. In a sense, then, I suppose we should thank critics of Christianity for bringing to our attention the scriptures they dislike.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Dan Barker (2016), "The 10 Worst Old Testament Verses by Dan Barker," *Freethought Today*, April, <https://ffrf.org/publications/freethought-today/item/26141-the-10-worst-old-testament-verses>.
- ² Ibid.
- ³ "Top 10 Worst Bible Passages" (2009), *Telegraph*, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/religion/6120373/Top-10-worst-Bible-passages.html>.
- ⁴ "The 10 Worst Old Testament Verses by Dan Barker," emp. added.
- ⁵ For further insight into Psalm 137, see Kyle Butt (2016), "Psalm 137:9—Dashing Babies' Heads Against a Stone," Apologetics Press, <https://apologeticspress.org/apcontent.aspx?category=13&article=913>.
- ⁶ "Top 10 Worst Bible Passages."
- ⁷ Dan Barker (2016), *God: The Most Unpleasant Character in All Fiction* (New York: Sterling), p. 97, emp. added.
- ⁸ Ibid., p. 99.
- ⁹ Charles Darwin (1871), *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex* (New York: The Modern Library, reprint), pp. 873-874, emp. added.
- ¹⁰ For more information on "The Biblical View of Women," see Kyle Butt's 2011 article by this title at <http://apologeticspress.org/APContent.aspx?category=13&article=3654>.
- ¹¹ For further reading on the role of women in the church, see Dave Miller (2014), "Male and Female Roles: Gender in the Bible," Apologetics Press, <http://www.apologeticspress.org/APContent.aspx?category=11&article=5007&topic=389>.
- ¹² Penn Jillette (2010), "How Did You Become an Atheist?" *BigThink*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E3rGev6OZ3w>.
- ¹³ Valerie Tarico (2014), "11 Kinds of Bible Verses Christians Love to Ignore," May 31, https://www.salon.com/2014/05/31/11_kinds_of_bible-verses_christians_love_to_ignore_partner/.
- ¹⁴ John Simkin (2014), "Slavery in the Roman Empire," *Spartacus Educational*, <http://spartacus-educational.com/ROMslaves.htm>.
- ¹⁵ Simkin.
- ¹⁶ "Conscription," *Merriam-Webster.com*, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/conscription>, emp. added.
- ¹⁷ "Who Must Register" (2008), Selective Service System, <https://web.archive.org/web/20090507213840/http://www.sss.gov/FSwho.htm>.
- ¹⁸ Frederick Danker, William Arndt, and F.W. Gingrich (2000), *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press), p. 76.
- ¹⁹ The one exception being never to "obey man" if submission to him conflicted with a command from God. For example, to those who "commanded" Peter and John "not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus" (Acts 4:17-18; 5:28), the apostles answered, "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). "For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20).
- ²⁰ Various forms of slavery have been commonplace throughout history. Virtually every ancient civilization used slaves ["History of Slavery" (no date), *History World*, www.historyworld.net/wrldhis/PlainTextHistories.asp?historyid=ac41]. Slavery was prevalent enough in Babylon in the 18th century B.C. to be mentioned numerous times in the Code of Hammurabi ["Code of Hammurabi, King of Babylon" (no date), https://archive.org/stream/cu31924060109703/cu31924060109703_djvu.txt]. What's more, historians estimate that, by the time Paul wrote his New Testament epistles in the first century A.D., five to eight million slaves resided within the Roman Empire, including 15-25% of the total population of Italy [Walter Scheidel (2007), "The Roman Slave Supply," pp. 3-6, <https://www.princeton.edu/~pswpc/pdfs/scheidel/050704.pdf>].
- ²¹ See Dave Miller's article titled "Philemon and Slavery" (2005), <https://apologeticspress.org/apcontent.aspx?category=11&article=560> to learn more about how "God would have slaves not to be treated as slaves." The Gospel of Jesus Christ "effectively eradicates the forms of slavery that are deemed objectionable."
- ²² If you would like to read a more extensive response to questions regarding slavery, and especially slavery in the Old Testament, see Kyle Butt (2005), "Defending the Bible's Position on Slavery," *Reason & Revelation*, 25[6]:41-47, June, https://www.apologeticspress.org/pub_rar/25_6/0506.pdf.
- ²³ Bertrand Russell (1927), "Why I Am Not a Christian," <https://users.drew.edu/~jlenz/whynot.html>, emp. added.
- ²⁴ Ibid.
- ²⁵ For a detailed response to annihilationists who claim "eternal" hell is **not** a reference to "time" or "duration," but only an allusion to its "nature," see Eric Lyons and Kyle Butt (2005), "The Eternality of Hell [Parts I & II]," Apologetics Press, *Reason & Revelation*, January & February, <http://apologeticspress.org/APContent.aspx?category=11&article=1474&topic=427>; <http://apologeticspress.org/apcontent.aspx?category=11&article=1475>.
- ²⁶ Independent of people's feelings.
- ²⁷ Thomas B. Warren and Wallace I. Matson (1978), *The Warren-Matson Debate* (Jonesboro, AR: National Christian Press), p. 284.
- ²⁸ See Eric Lyons and Kyle Butt (2017), *Reasons to Believe* (Montgomery, AL: Apologetics Press).
- ²⁹ Though Bertrand Russell criticized Christ for preaching on hell, while praising Socrates for being "bland and urbane towards people who would not listen to him," Socrates was **not** dealing with the absolute, most important message that man could ever hear: the way to eternal life versus the tragedy of eternal punishment. Logically speaking, Jesus' warning others about hell was one of the most loving things that He (or anyone) could preach. After all, if His preaching on hell convinced men to follow God's gracious "way" to eternal life (John 14:6), then He saved them from eternal death. No one thinks of firemen, policemen, or doctors as being unkind when they warn others of potential physical harm or death, so how could anyone logically argue that Jesus was being unkind when He warned His hearers of the greatest tragedy of all—eternal, spiritual separation from God?



NOTE FROM

The Editor



Bound Volumes, Miracles Book, & 40 Years

At the first of every year, we offer to readers the bound volumes of our two monthly magazines from the previous year. These bound volumes enable the articles contained therein to remain relevant far beyond the time period during which they were authored. The bound volume of *Reason & Revelation* for 2019 contains several meaningful articles, including: 21 Reasons to Believe the Earth is Young; Proof of Bible Inspiration: The Passover; Are Biblical Giants Mythical?; The Goldilocks Principle: The Earth Is Designed for Us; “A Book of Jewish Fables”?; Does Numbers 5:11-22 Condone Abortion?; What is the “Firmament” of Genesis 1:6?; Who Did Cain Marry?; Belief in God is Hard-Wired into Man; Was the Flood Global?; Behemoth and Leviathan: Figurative or Literal?; Does Distant Starlight Prove an Old Universe?; If I Were an Atheist...; Does the Fossil Record Support Creation and the Flood?; Was the Ark Large Enough for ALL of the Animals?; The Despair of Atheism; “Believing” in John 3:16; Has the Bible Been Transmitted To Us Accurately?; Does Balaam’s Talking Donkey Prove That the Bible Is a Book of Fables?; The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Bible; and “Atheist-Making” Bible Verses You Need to Know. As always,

this beautifully bound annual collation contains all 12 issues for the year, as well as an author/title index and a glossy cover.

Additionally, the 2019 bound volume of *Discovery*, our monthly magazine on Scripture and science for children, is now available. During 2019, *Discovery* contained articles on such timely themes as: Scientific Evidence for a Global Flood; Bees; Genesis 5; the Ice Age; Living Fossils; the American Museum of Natural History; The Coming of Christ; Noah and the Flood; Sharks; Caves; Dinosaurs; and Creatures Before the Flood. These topics will build the faith of children and insulate them against unbelief. Please be reminded that for both *Discovery* and *Reason & Revelation*, whenever the bound volumes go out of print, they are gone forever; we do not reprint them. So be sure to order your copies soon. Some previous volumes are still available. Visit our Web Store for ordering information.

One final note: perhaps you noticed the logo on the lower left corner of the front page of this issue of *R&R*. It is difficult to believe that this journal is now in its 40th year. May God continue to bless this publication to His glory.

Dave Miller